



Graduation—you probably daydream about it. It’s a big step. But it isn’t the end of your education. Do you know that most of the fastest growing jobs will require some education or training beyond high school? That means you’ll need to make some plans to prepare for that dream job. Lifelong learning is the ticket. Today’s workplace requires workers to keep their skills up to date, not just for a few years but for their whole career. So, think of graduating from high school as an exciting new beginning and an important transition point in building your career.

In the next few years you’ll have a lot of decisions to make about your career and you’ll have a lot of choices to consider. Sometimes it might seem a bit scary. Don’t worry. The skills, knowledge, and good learning habits you develop in high school are the foundation for your future success—whether in college, training, the military, or other roads leading to a solid career.

Want to know more? Explore the topics below:

- **Is getting more education/training after high school worth it?**
- **Why do I need a plan for education/training after high school?**
- **What steps should I take before deciding what to do after high school?**
- **What are some ways to get education and training after high school?**
- **Certificate, degree, diploma, license—What’s it all about?**
- **How do I choose a college?**
- **What about paying for college?**
- **Are there ways to jumpstart my career while I’m in college?**
- **What about lifelong learning?**



Is getting more education/training after high school worth it?

Studies show that people with a postsecondary degree earn more money over the course of their careers and are less likely to be unemployed than those without a degree.

Level of Education Attained	Median Weekly Earnings in 2003 (Dollars)	Unemployment Rate in 2003 (Percent)
Doctoral degree	\$1,349	2.1
Professional degree	\$1,307	1.7
Master's degree	\$1,064	2.9
Bachelor's degree	\$900	3.3
Associate degree	\$672	4.0
Some college, no degree	\$622	5.2
High-school graduate	\$554	5.5
Some high-school, no diploma	\$396	8.8

Source: Unemployment rate, 2003 annual average: Bureau of Labor Statistics; earnings, March 2003: Bureau of the Census.
<http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm>

Why do I need a plan for education/training after high school?

It isn't likely that someone will offer you your dream job straight out of high school. You have to meet the requirements for the job and that usually means getting more education and training after graduation. Did you know that...

- 48 of the 50 fastest growing jobs in the U.S. require some type of education beyond high school.
- People who don't have training after high school are three times more likely to be unemployed than those who do.
- People who have some training after high school make more money and have better opportunities for career advancement than those who have only a high school diploma.
- Freshmen who don't have a career goal or academic major when they enter college are more likely to drop out.
- If you have a solid plan before graduating, your chances for success in postsecondary education increase.

When you have a plan, you have a better chance of reaching your goal.



What steps should I take before deciding what to do after high school?

So, what are you going to do after high school? The closer you get to graduation, the more people ask you that question. Maybe you already know the answer. Or, maybe you're still struggling to find your answers. You don't have to go it alone. Talk to your parents, relatives, friends, teachers and school counselor. Make a list of what you like to do and things that interest you. Get information about occupations and schools. Your school library has some good resources. Check out the student section of the ACRN Web site, <http://www.acrnetwork.org/ncdg.htm> and explore these topics:

- About Me
- About My Career
- About Reaching My Career Goals
- School Days
- Where the Jobs Are

Take action....get started!

What are some ways to get education and training after high school?

There are lots of ways you can get education/training after high school. Some of the most common are:

- Four-Year Colleges and Universities
- Two-Year Community/Technical Colleges
- Career/Technical Schools
- Apprenticeships
- The Military
- On-the-Job Training

Four-Year Colleges and Universities

A college is an institution of higher education that awards primarily undergraduate degrees (e.g., Bachelor's degree). A university is an institution of higher education that awards undergraduate and graduate degrees (e.g., Master's degree, Doctoral degree). There are more than 2000 colleges and universities where you can earn a Bachelor's degree. They range from small, private liberal arts colleges to large public universities located in each state. Often called "four-year" colleges, these institutions provide programs in a wide range of majors, or subject areas. They vary in size, number of different departments, difficulty in gaining admission, funding source (public, private, or proprietary), tuition costs, percentage of students who live on campus, and areas of specialty. Many professional positions in the workplace require a Bachelor's degree for employment.

It's important to start early in thinking about college. This not only means taking and doing well in rigorous academic courses, but also thinking about the type of college you would like, pursuing financial aid or scholarships to help pay for college, and taking any required aptitude or achievement tests. Colleges also look at your other activities during high school, such as athletics, drama, community service, work and



volunteer activities. If you are considering colleges or universities located outside your local area, try to get a real feel for the institution by visiting the campus, talking to students or graduates who live in your area, or viewing a “virtual tour” on the Internet. Your high school guidance office should be able to help you with this process, as well as give you some advice on the application process. Your local library, bookstores, and Internet sites focused on the college search have resources that can help you figure out what colleges would be a good fit for you.

Two-Year Community/Technical Colleges

Community or technical colleges, sometimes called “two-year” colleges, are located throughout the country. Most of their students come from the local area. These public colleges usually have the lowest tuition costs, yet they offer a variety of programs of study. These include short-duration occupational degree programs, Associate degree programs in occupational or academic areas, preparation for transfer to a four-year college or university, and a wide range of classes for those seeking a particular skill. There are also private two-year colleges and proprietary, or for-profit, training or career schools that offer Associate degrees.

Career/Technical Schools

Career/Technical schools offer short-duration occupational diploma or certification programs. They are often proprietary, or for-profit schools that specialize in a few, highly focused programs.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are state registered training programs in which you learn a trade under the guidance of a skilled craft worker. Completing an apprenticeship takes two to four years depending on the trade and includes structured on-the-job learning and related technical instruction. The Apprenticeship Completion Certificate is recognized in every state. Some apprenticeships programs also have agreements with postsecondary institutions that allow credit for apprenticeships to be applied toward an Associate degree.

Apprentices are paid a gradually increasing percentage of the hourly rate of certified workers in that field. There are over 500 occupations for which you could get an apprenticeship (e.g., dental laboratory technician, mechanic, heavy equipment operator, carpenter, welder, plumber and electrician).

For More Information:

- U.S. Department of Labor, Find a Program http://www.doleta.gov/ATELS_bat/fndprgm.cfm
- National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors
<http://www.nastad.net/index.cfm?page=3>
- State Offices of U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer and Labor Services, and Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

After Graduation



http://www.doleta.gov/ATELS_bat/stateoffices.cfm

- Registered Apprenticeship Brochures http://www.doleta.gov/ATELS_bat/e-tools.cfm
- New Apprenticeships information http://www.newapprenticeships.gov.au/school_student/default.asp

The Military

You can get education and skill training for many occupations through a branch of the US Armed Services: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy, as well as their respective Reserve and National Guard formations. Together, they offer full-time and part-time training and opportunities for over 4,100 different military jobs. Service in the military can be a long-term occupation or help prepare you for employment elsewhere after you have completed your service. Occupations encompass a wide range of employment including logistics, law, intelligence, communications, administrative support, medical services, computers and transportation, as well as combat.

For More Information:

- General information on the military services (www.todaysmilitary.com)
- Air Force (http://www.airforce.com/index_fr.htm)
- Army (<http://www.goarmy.com/JobCatList.do>)
- Coast Guard (<http://www.uscg.mil/jobs/Jobs.html>)
- Marine Corps (http://www.marines.com/enlisted_marines/professionalopps.asp)
- Navy (<http://www.navy.com/careers>)

The Military and College

Another way to get military training is to join a branch of the Armed Services while you are in college through the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs offered by the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. These programs train qualified young men and women to become officers in those services upon graduation from college. ROTC is available in over 1,000 colleges and universities throughout the country.

During college, ROTC students take a full course load. Their curriculum also includes military science courses that provide the specialized knowledge needed as an officer. In addition to academic courses, ROTC candidates engage in drills, training activities and summer programs. While not all ROTC students receive them, hundreds of scholarships are competitively awarded based on criteria such as high school academic record, SAT or ACT scores, extracurricular activities and personal interviews.

The military academies also offer college opportunities with full scholarships. Applications to the Army, Naval, Air Force or Merchant Marine Academy require a political nomination for appointment, while applications to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy do not. You can apply for a nomination from your local US Representative or Senator by contacting their office. Most require a letter of request, data on your high school academic record, scores on national tests such as the SAT or ACT and letters of recommendation. You should begin that application process during your junior year in high school. The academies base their admissions on



academic, physical and leadership potential. Upon graduation, students are commissioned and complete their required service, typically a minimum of five to eight years, although some of that may be as a reserve, rather than active, officer.

For More Information:

- ROTC general information http://www.todaysmilitary.com/wyg/t5_wyg_rotc.php
- ROTC At a Glance http://www.todaysmilitary.com/wyg/t8_wyg_rotc_ataglance.php
- Military academies U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, U.S. Military Academy at West Point (Army), U.S. Naval Academy and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

On-the-Job Training

For many occupations, even if you are not enrolling in a further education or training program, you will still need formal, on-the-job training to learn about specific practices or equipment. New employees in jobs such as flight attendant, bank teller or emergency dispatcher receive on-the-job training before they can operate on their own.

Certificate, degree, diploma, license—What's it all about?

There are many levels of higher education degrees or credentials available to pursue. As the earnings chart on the second page shows, the higher the degree you earn, the higher the average earnings. In general, students enrolling in higher education have goals of a certificate, associate degree, bachelor degree and/or graduate degree. In planning how to enter your chosen occupation, it's important to make sure you can move from one education level to another if you think you will be going further—even at a later date.

Certificate Programs

Many community colleges, technical schools and private career schools offer six-month to one-year programs that lead to certification in a specific skill area. Certificate programs are also offered via distance learning—through the Internet or video-linked facilities. Many certificate programs are designed so that you can go on to get your associate degree in a related field, while other vocational certificates are geared towards immediate employment. Check with the school or college you are considering to see if their program allows an easy transfer of your credit hours to further education if you think you may want to continue.

For many occupations, a certificate is a generally recognized credential that lets employers know you have the knowledge and skills for entering that field of employment. Careers that might require a certificate program include pharmacy technician, dental assistant, paralegal, computer equipment repair and medical assistant.



For More Information

- Thinking About Going to a Career College or Technical School? <http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/consumerinfo/index.html>
- Community College Directory <http://www.community-college.org/>
- College Opportunities On Line (COOL) <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/>

Associate Degree Programs

An Associate degree typically requires a minimum of 60 semester credit hours. That's four semesters (two years) if you are taking courses full-time. Your degree may be in an occupational or technical area, arts and sciences, or general education. Many students transfer to a college or university for a Bachelor degree after completing the Associate degree. If you are planning to transfer, it's important to check into the procedures you need to follow to make sure the credit for your courses will be accepted by the next college. Some four-year colleges or universities do not accept all credits earned at a community college, while others have clear paths for students who want to transfer. In a number of states, there are transfer agreements among the community colleges and the public four-year colleges or universities.

Types of Associate Degree Programs:

- **A.A.** – "Associate of Arts" degrees are designed to be either an end degree or to transfer to a four-year college or university. Majors are typically in the social sciences or humanities, as well as general studies.
- **A.S.** – "Associate of Science" degrees are designed to be either an end degree or to transfer to a four-year college or university. Majors are usually in mathematics, natural sciences, or technology.
- **A.A.S.** – "Associate of Applied Science" degrees typically prepare you for career entry or job advancement. All or part of the credits earned under an AAS degree may or may not transfer to four-year colleges.

For More Information:

College Selection

- College Opportunities On Line (COOL) <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/>
- Community College Directory <http://www.community-college.org/>

Financial Aid and Paying for College

- How to Find and Pay for College <http://www.ed.gov/students/college/aid/edpicks.jhtml?src=In>
- Publications on Student Financial Aid and Scholarships <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/publications.jsp>
- The Student Guide http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html



Bachelor's Degree Programs

A Bachelor's degree program typically requires a minimum of 120 semester credit hours. That's eight semesters (four years) if you are taking courses full time. You may earn a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree.

For More Information:

Selecting a College or University

- College Opportunities On Line (COOL) <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/>
- Peterson's College Guide <http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel/www.students.gov>
- Yahoo Guide to U.S. Colleges and Universities
http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/Higher_Education/Colleges_and_Universities/United_States/
- Online College Resources
http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/Higher_Education/College_and_University_Entrance/

Financial Aid and Paying for College

- How to Find and Pay for College <http://www.ed.gov/students/college/aid/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>
- Publications on Student Financial Aid and Scholarships
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/publications.jsp>
- The Student Guide http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

Graduate Education

Certain occupations require education beyond a Bachelor degree. You can enter graduate school directly after college or at a later date. A Bachelor's degree is usually required before a student can begin studying for a graduate degree. A graduate degree is typically earned through two or more years of advanced studies beyond four years of college. This might be a Master's or a Doctoral degree in a particular field or a specialized degree required in certain professions such as law, social work, architecture, or medicine.

For More Information:

- Graduate school information and selection
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/gradstudent.jsp>

Licensure

Some occupations require certification or licensure beyond your education degree. For example, teaching, nursing, real estate, medicine and law have additional tests for which you study to obtain the certificate or license to practice your profession. In some cases, you must take periodic tests to ensure your knowledge is up-to-date.



How do I choose a college?

As you plan for the type of occupation or field of study that interests you, you will find that many postsecondary institutions offer programs that meet your needs. Colleges and universities range in size, location, cost of tuition and specialization in certain fields of study. There are many resources that can help you select the right institution for you. Your high school guidance office and your local library should have information about colleges and occupations. There are also lots of resources online.

Resource materials that describe different occupations will often tell you about the level of education and type of degree or credential that will best prepare you for the occupational area of interest to you. There are a number of college guides that describe the programs and the personality of different institutions. Be sure to check that the colleges or universities you consider not only offer the programs that most interest you, but also have the range of courses you want, offer them at times that work for you, and have a history of graduates gaining the type of jobs or further education that are important to you. The federal government Web site (www.students.gov) has links to resources on preparing for, selecting and paying for college.

For More Information:

Career Information

- CareerOneStop (collection of free career, employment and education resources)
<http://www.careeronestop.org/>
- America's Career InfoNet <http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

College Selection Information

- College Opportunities On Line (COOL) <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/>
- Peterson's Guide <http://www.petersons.com/ugchannel/>
- Yahoo Guide to US Colleges and Universities
http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/Higher_Education/Colleges_and_Universities/United_States/
- Online College Resources
http://dir.yahoo.com/Education/Higher_Education/College_and_University_Entrance/www.students.gov

What about paying for college?

Most students and their families are concerned about paying for college. Fortunately, not only do some colleges have significantly lower tuition, there are also a variety of programs that the federal government, states, colleges and other entities offer to provide financial assistance in paying for college. The U.S. Department of Education offers financial aid through grants, loans and work-study. Grants are awards that generally do not have to be repaid as long as you fulfill the requirements. Loans must be repaid, but are offered at a lower interest rate to help you pay for college. Work-study programs support paid jobs, usually on campus, while you are in college. The earnings help you pay for college, and do not have to be repaid. Eligibility for grants, work-study and some loans are determined by demonstrating need, or less financial resources, for paying for college. There are also education and training tax credits or benefits that may be available.



Most colleges also offer financial aid packages to qualified students. This may be a combination of grants and loans. Scholarships are offered by educational institutions, many states and a variety of organizations. The federal government also supports higher education at the highly competitive military academies and through participation in the Reserve Officers Training Corps. See the section on the military for more information about those options.

To find out more about financial aid, visit Web resources or your high school guidance office to understand what is available. The most important thing is to be early in checking into what's offered and to make sure you know and meet the deadlines for applications. Financial aid workshops for students and parents are often offered by colleges, high schools and others.

For More Information:

- How to Find and Pay for College <http://www.ed.gov/students/college/aid/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>
- Publications on Student Financial Aid and Scholarships
<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/publications.jsp>
- The Student Guide http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

Are there ways to jumpstart my career while I'm in college?

There are many ways to pursue your career interests while you are in college. Most colleges offer internships or cooperative education programs that connect your academic program with employment in the workplace while you are still a student. These practical work experiences give you a chance to explore your field of interest, help you gain work-related skills and provide a network of contacts and a resumé of experience that can give you an edge in finding a job after you complete your educational program. The career services office at your college or university has information about internships, interviewing for jobs after graduation, graduate school options and a variety of career exploration and job search activities.

For More Information:

- Internships and summer jobs http://www.quintcareers.com/grad_internships.html
- Cooperative education <http://www.co-op.edu/>

What about lifelong learning?

Jobs and occupations are changing in the fast-paced economy of the 21st century. New career opportunities open up and even existing jobs require new learning and skills to keep up with the technologies and information that continue to emerge. You have to keep your skills up-to-date in order to stay competitive in the job market. That means that you will need to continue your education/training throughout your life. That's what is commonly called "Lifelong Learning." Being able to find and succeed in continued learning helps to put you in the driver's seat for adapting to changes in the job market.



There are both formal and informal ways to continue learning. You may select a structured program leading to another degree or credential in a field of interest to you. That might even be several years after you have entered the workforce. In addition, throughout your career, you will continue to learn new skills, practices, or even be exposed to new occupations through informal training or interaction with your fellow workers or professional colleagues.

Types of Lifelong Learning

- *Formal* ways of continuing your learning include additional certificate or degree programs. These can be done at a college, at an off-campus location, at a work site, through a private career program, or even via distance learning.
- *Formal training* continues throughout your career. Almost every place of employment offers some *workplace learning or professional development opportunities*. These can range from sharing information or techniques with colleagues at work to more structured professional development programs. Through these activities, you may learn new computer skills, engage in ways to work as a team with fellow employees, or find out about cutting-edge practices in your industry or field.
- *Professional or trade associations* in your occupational area often offer publications, national or regional conferences and training opportunities. Participation in those associations also gives you a chance to meet colleagues in your field and learn about other job opportunities.
- *Individual courses at a college, career school, adult education provider, or through distance learning* provide ways to learn new skills as you go through life.
- Other informal methods include *reading professional or topical journals* and *Internet research* related to your occupational area or new practices. In addition, *other life experiences* such as heading a volunteer group or working with a church or social organization may also teach important skills in leadership, management and teamwork. These experiences also add to your network of friends and colleagues who may provide new job opportunities or information that continues to build your set of skills.